

Seattle City Council

**Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee Meeting**

2 p.m. Wednesday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012

**Words' Worth**

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Sibyl James**

Today's poet is **Kathleen Flenniken**

**Kathleen Flenniken** is the 2012 – 2014 Washington State Poet Laureate. Her new collection, *Plume* (University of Washington Press), is a meditation on the Hanford Nuclear Site. Her first book, *Famous* (University of Nebraska Press), was named a Notable Book by the American Library Association and a finalist for the Washington State Book Award. Flenniken's awards include a Pushcart Prize and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and Artist Trust.

News Item

By Kathleen Flenniken

*"New research suggests we have a fixed reservoir of self-restraint."*

This is why at the end of the day  
you smuggle bowls of ice cream to the TV

Or put another way  
when you pushed your plate aside  
and hunger kneaded your gut for months  
this is why you crammed the closet with new clothes  
and emerged from your diving bell  
in a breathless hotel room  
why you let the coat fall from your shoulders

That manic week  
when you ironed every shirt and tablecloth  
why you couldn't keep up with the grief

Last night sirens passed close  
this morning the airwaves crash and moil

and your mail is flooded with catalogs

This is why you've staged your house like a catalog  
why you can't bear to open the bills  
why streets are jammed with luxury cars  
and panhandlers  
and your country is at war

End.